

COME TO JESUS.

MEMORIAL SERMON

Preached on the occasion of the death of Maggie E.,
youngest and dearly beloved Daughter of Mr. Chas.
Rennie, who departed this life at Port Perry on the
28th day of October, 1893, by her Pastor,

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"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."—John vi., 37.

THESE words were whispered in my ears by lips that were then dying, and are now cold in death. I have been requested by the late Maggie E. Rennie, whose mortal remains we followed to the grave on Monday last, to preach from this text. It is in obedience to her dying wish, and in the fulfilment of the Master's service, that I now ask your attention for a short time to the consideration of this delightful passage. Coming to us as it does, freighted with the interest of being one of the consoling thoughts of a mind and soul that we knew and loved, when passing through the dark valley and shadow of death, it cannot fail to arrest attention, and awaken serious thoughts and devout imaginings within us. What has given her strength in the hour of weakness, light in darkness, hope in despair, joy in grief, victory in death, may be relied upon to minister similarly to ourselves. When we are called upon to pass through the deep waters, may our souls, like hers, be fortified by this and like passages of the Word of God that abideth forever. No greater solace can we crave than to rest our weary minds in humble, childlike faith upon the pillow of His precious promises. Let me first of all ask you to observe the cheerful character of the text, and from that be reminded of the nature of the soul that so lately made use of it, in what is universally conceded to be the most trying ordeal of human existence. At such a time, there is a tendency to fasten upon the dark and mournful aspects of divine revelation. But this

dear girl was bright and cheerful in life, and even in her death she preferred to look upon the bright side of things. This was noticeable not only in her favorite scriptures, but in her ordinary thoughts and spiritual ideas. It was not until the very last that she despaired of being present at the services in connection with the opening and dedication of this new church building. Nor was this a vain or morbid desire; for much as she loved to be present on that occasion, I believe she thought more of the truth that would feed her soul than of any time, place or circumstance. This characteristic came out most beautifully in her views of death, which she regarded in the true Christian light of being "far better," inasmuch as it brings the soul into personal and perfect fellowship with the dear and loving Saviour. Happy all those who in the presence of the "King of Terrors" can cheerfully and resignedly say: "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." "For me to live is Christ, but to die is gain." "O Death, where is thy sting, O Grave, where is thy victory!"

In studying this passage the following thoughts claim attention:

1. The universality of the Gospel offer of salvation.
2. The individuality of the Gospel offer of salvation.
3. The terms upon which salvation may be obtained.
4. The certainty of salvation to all who comply and accept.
5. The content or character of salvation as it concerns the individual soul.

1. Truly this is one of the glorious invitations of the Gospel. And what renders these invitations glorious is their universal applicability. They are for all who will accept of them. Judged from this standpoint, our text need not give place to any other; for it is capable of embracing in its capacious sweep the whole brotherhood of man. No one is excluded from participation in the benefits conferred upon mankind by the life of obedience, by the death of expiation effected by the Saviour, Jesus Christ. He stands forth in this place, offering the blessings of salvation to all alike, high and low, rich and poor, learned and illiterate. Let us thank God for so great salvation—a salvation that is so great as to reach to the most obscure person in the most obscure corner of the universe that He has made. This salvation is high as Heaven, deep as Hell, and wide as the distance between east and west. The Cross of Christ is simply God's love imbedded in human woe, overshadowing it with extended arms wherever it exists, and pointing and helping human souls upward into the fellowship and blessedness of God.

2. And with all its liberality this text is wonderfully definite, distinct and individual. Do you not perceive that it is not addressed so much to man in general as to *you* in particular? Another version of it is: "Whosoever cometh unto me," etc. That was the version used by our dear departed friend. "Whosoever!" Thank God for that word. It means *you*. There can be no doubt about it. That word makes you surer that *you* are included in the invitation of Christ than if you saw your very name there. There might easily be others of your name, and the invitation might be for them. But "whosoever" settles the matter. No reasonable man can maintain that you have no part in the glorious invitation of Christ to salvation through Him. You cannot doubt it yourself unless you allow yourself to be deluded by Satan at his will. If, then, we realize that Christ is inviting us most kindly to the salvation that is in His Gospel, and that we are perishing for that salvation, a salvation which can not be had in any other way, "for there is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby they can be saved," how foolish, oh! how criminal not to seek, not to accept it graciously at His loving hands! Have you accepted, dear hearer? This is God's question to you for this occasion, and it comes to you freighted with memories of her through whom God, in his providence, has brought this text before you to-day. By all the glories of the heaven to be gained, by all the miseries of the hell to be escaped, give this question a prayerful study and a candid answer. Give no rest to your body, nor sleep to your eyelids, until you have accepted this personal invitation to the salvation that is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. As far as the conditions of salvation are concerned none could be easier, "Cometh unto me." If we love a person how easy it is to "come" to that person. The exercise of coming is delightful. If we are in trouble how natural to go to our best friend. Why should we find it difficult to go to the "friend that sticketh closer than a brother" when we are in the direst straits—in danger of eternal death. In the days of the earthly ministry of our Saviour nothing was easier than to "come" to Him. He was the most accessible of men, all classes and creeds found Him ready to listen and assist. This ease of access to His person is made the figure to represent the spiritual freedom of every believer, of every soul to come and partake of the benefits of His redemption. We cannot now come to Christ in a physical sense. "He is not here, He is risen" but we can come to Him still in the fundamental and spiritual sense. Many came to him in the days of His flesh, many attended his earthly ministry without profit. They

went away unsaved. But all those who come to Him in the sense of believing His word, loving His person, accepting His salvation shall be saved. By all your souls needs; by all its faculties of enjoyment and of service, I entreat and admonish you lay this text seriously to heart, and in obedience to it "come" to Christ. He will satisfy your every desire. In Him you will find all you seek and infinitely more. Try him. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden."

4. The certainty of salvation to all who comply with the terms upon which it is offered is one of the most pleasing features of the text. It reads "I will in no wise cast out" those that came unto me. "*In no wise.*" What plain and forcible words! It is as if the very thought were repugnant to the speaker. The Lord Jesus Christ is so anxious to save, that there is not the shadow of a possibility that He will refuse to save those who place themselves in a condition to be saved. He is most willing to save all who give Him the least opportunity. How, then, can He "cast out" any who come to Him. It cannot be. It is foreign to His loving nature, to the principles of His being. No one need have the least fear that such a calamity will happen as that after he has come to Christ he will be rejected and cast out. Such never happened, no nor ever shall. No one ever yet tried Him and found Him wanting, or His promise a failure. Neither shall you. Throw yourself in faith upon His word. Come to Him in this way and you "shall in no wise be cast out." The bridge which has carried millions to glory before you will surely suffice for your soul. How can you doubt Him who is the Way? Do not. But come to Him in faith, and follow Him in love, and you shall in no wise lose your reward.

The proper ground of christian assurance of salvation is not human feeling, which fluctuates like the tide of the ocean—one day we are borne aloft upon the billow of some emotion, the next we are stranded upon the shoals of spiritual difficulty. The real basis of assurance is the Word of God, which does not change nor pass away, but which like Himself abideth forever. We should be assured that we are saved because God says so. What stronger reason should we need? And this text states plainly as words can, that if man *comes* He will *save*. Surely we know whether we have come to Jesus Christ the Saviour in faith and sincerity. That decided, what difficulty should there be in attaining to that blessed and comforting christian experience known as assurance of personal salvation? Let us strive by taking Christ at His word, as in the terms of the text, to real-

ize the happiness of those who know their sins are forgiven, and that a glorious inheritance awaits them beyond death and the grave.

5. What is salvation? This is a great question, and like all such subjects is more easily described negatively. It comprises so much, that it is far easier to say what it is not, than what it is. The text treats the subject in this way. The calamity of soul destruction to be avoided is described as being "cast out." By inference, the good of salvation to be attained is evading the result of being "cast out." The fate of the wicked is described in the Word as being "cast out into outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." Salvation is, on one side, being saved from this awful punishment. It is, on the other, being admitted to all the glory and blessedness of God and His people in Heaven. Here is something which must appeal to us, for we want to escape the punishment of sin, and to obtain the happiness of the Kingdom of God. Dear friends! there is only one way in which we can do it. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" says Christ. And "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Kindred passages teach us the futility of trusting to any other means of salvation. Begone all the devices of worldly wisdom, all the imagining of the natural heart, all the suggestions of Satan, Christ and nothing but Christ for my salvation.

In conclusion, we as a congregation, pastor and people, beg to convey an expression of our sympathy with the bereaved family and friends. We feel that your loss has been great, but her gain is greater. Her place is now vacant at the family fireside, but we believe that it is filled by her immortal spirit in the Heavenly circle. No more shall we see her in her accustomed place in the earthly sanctuary in the midst of the gatherings of God's people, but we believe that if we had eyes that could see within the vail, we should see her in the "upper sanctuary" with the saints, and the angels, and the dear Lord and Saviour. A seat is empty in our church choir, but we trust that it is compensated for, by an accession to the great throng that surrounds the throne in glory singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. The voice of a sweet singer has been hushed whilst we listened; but we believe that this was so, only in order that it might take up a higher note and a loftier strain in the chorus of the redeemed.

To the devoted father, an elder in our own church, to the loving mother, a mother in Israel, to the tender-hearted sisters and faithful brothers, to all the kindred and connexions we would convey our heartfelt

sympathy in this bereavement. We bid you say in the spirit of resignation and in the language of Scripture: "The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord," "Even so Father for so it seemed good in thy sight."

VICTORY OVER DEATH.

To be sung to the tune of "The Dying Christian."

"Vital spark of Heavenly flame !
Quit, oh, quit this mortal ~~flame~~ *frame*
Trembling, hoping, lingering, flying,
Oh ! the pain, the bliss of dying.
Cease, fond nature, cease thy strife
And let me languish into life.

Hark ! they whisper; angels say,
"Sister spirit, come away !"
What is this absorbs me quite
Steals my senses, shuts my sight,
Drowns my spirits, draws my breath ?
Tell me, my soul, can this be death ?

The world recedes ; it disappears !
Heaven opens on my eyes ! my ears
With sounds seraphic ring !
Lend, lend your wings ! I mount ! I fly !
O Grave, where is thy victory ?
O Death, where is thy sting !"

—Pope.